



U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS/SAFETY CENTER

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## Equipment situational awareness matters

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**FORT RUCKER, Ala.** – There's an element of risk involved when Soldiers work in motor pools, around aircraft or any equipment that must be climbed to accomplish different tasks. For many Soldiers, it's part of a safely accomplished mission; but for others, a split-second mishap serves as a lifelong reminder of the associated hazards.

Between fiscal years 2008-2013, 16 Class B accidents caused by improper mounting and dismounting procedures were reported to the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center. All 16 resulted in the amputation of fingers or fingertips, and 10 involved Soldiers wearing rings that caught on equipment.

"Soldiers should always be aware of hazards, especially when climbing onto or off equipment during maintenance or while securing equipment for transport," said Mike Wood, a safety and occupational health specialist at the USACR/Safety Center. "Climbing on and off equipment may sound easy, but when Soldiers don't complete their tasks safely, they risk severe injury."

During 2010, a Soldier lost his footing while dismounting an MRAP Maxx Pro. As he grabbed the vehicle to stop his fall, his wedding ring became caught on a bolt, amputating his finger.

Investigators determined the Soldier was overconfident and did not follow proper procedures while dismounting the vehicle. He also failed to wear gloves, even though he was required to in accordance with the unit's standing operating procedures.

Another Soldier was preparing for equipment recovery and reset in Iraq. While dismounting an LMTV, he elected to jump off the vehicle instead of using the step-down ladder. He landed on the ground and continued with the mission, but later complained of back pain and was evacuated from theater for further medical evaluation.

Improper vehicle dismount, failure to maintain three points of contact and exercising poor judgment were all contributing factors in this accident.

Wood said the keys to prevention are engaged leadership, education and a positive safety culture.

"Incorporating these elements into a unit will promote safety and effectively influence Soldiers to carry it with them wherever they are and whatever they are doing," he said. "A positive culture builds teamwork, reliability and effectiveness among personnel. Paying attention and addressing safety issues is part of everyone's responsibility."

For more information on vehicle safety, visit <https://safety.army.mil>.